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A VISIT TO OTHERWHERE

by Kurt Leland, author

This story, excerpted from Kurt's book, *Otherwhere: A Field Guide for Astral Travelers*, tells of an adventure in consciousness he experienced at TMI in 1988. The Institute had recently launched PREP (the Personal Resource Exploration Program), a unique opportunity for personalized exploration using customized Monroe tech and the focused guidance of a skilled monitor. Kurt participated as part of TMI's Brainmapping Project, which was being conducted at the time.

Since then, hundreds of explorers have opted for "booth" experiences as a way to accelerate their consciousness development, to gently and safely explore deep-state awareness; to amplify the benefit and the depth of their connection with guidance.

> "Are you completely comfortable?" Rita asked.
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> I quickly checked my environment. The waterbed on which I was lying beneath a light blanket seemed warm enough. The slightly restraining pressure of the electrodes attached to my fingers to monitor my heart rate and galvanic skin response would take some getting used to. But the headphones through which Rita was speaking to me were well-adjusted—they wouldn't crush my ears. The room was so dark that it was impossible to see the microphone dangling above my mouth.
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> I'd been told that "the booth," as it was called by the staff of the Monroe Institute, was totally sound- and light-proof. Lined on the outside with copper sheets and oriented toward magnetic north, the booth was supposed to be the ideal setup for producing altered states of consciousness, including out-of-body experiences (OBEs). Only one ingredient was missing: the trademarked Hemi-Sync sounds invented by Robert Monroe, author of the well-known book *Journeys Out of the Body*.
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> Monroe believed that altered states of consciousness could be facilitated by subtle manipulations of sound waves. He founded the Monroe Institute, located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, as a laboratory in which to test his theories. Here, he hit upon the idea of feeding slightly different sound signals to each ear through a pair of headphones. The two hemispheres of the brain would act in concert to produce a third signal that existed within the brain alone. The resulting hemispheric synchronization made it possible to achieve a variety of altered states of consciousness, each with different properties.

Subsequent research focused on how to use these distinctive brain-wave states to enable OBEs. After many successful experiments along these lines, the Monroe Institute began offering outreach programs to the public. People could come to a week-long program, experience the Hemi-Sync sounds for themselves, and share their adventures and questions with Monroe and his excellent training staff.

I'd come to the Institute by a different route. My former literary agent, Eleanor Friede, was a neighbor of Bob Monroe. She arranged for me to spend some time in the lab when I was visiting her in the fall of 1988. Having read *Journeys Out of the Body* some years earlier, I'd experimented more recently with the Hemi-Sync® cassette tapes manufactured and distributed by the Monroe Institute. I was already familiar with several altered states produced by these sounds. However, the advantage of spending time in the booth was that the monitor in charge could generate Hemi-Sync sounds that were custom-tailored to my needs in an environment free of distractions.

"Everything seems fine," I told Rita, who was sitting some distance away from the booth at the console where she produced and mixed the Hemi-Sync sounds. Rita Warren was a former university professor of criminal psychology who came to the Monroe Institute after she and her husband retired. Fascinated with the work of the Institute, they bought property and built a house nearby. Rita, I was told, was one of the best of the lab's monitors. She too was wired with headphones and a mic so that we could communicate easily as the session progressed.

Before going into the booth, I'd been informed that one of the unique properties of the Hemi-Sync sounds and the booth setup is the creation of a split consciousness: users can report on what's happening in an altered state without disrupting their participation in that state. I would be expected to give a detailed description of what I was going through at every moment. Meanwhile, Rita would be standing by to provide assurance, to ask for clarification of my observations, and to bring me back to ordinary waking consciousness if I became frightened or was otherwise unable to proceed.

Rita Warren and Martin Warren, TMI Lab Control Room, circa 1985

Rita began to feed Hemi-Sync sounds into my headphones. At a certain point, I alerted her to the fact I was in an altered state.

“Very good,” Rita replied. “When you’re ready, I’d like you to continue to expand your consciousness. Relax and let the energy flow and go to a comfortable place for you to report from.” After a while, I described a sensation of floating, of being gently pulled or led somewhere. When I no longer seemed to be moving, I found myself in a cave. I was surrounded by ragged, semi-human creatures who were moaning in unspeakable pain. Some were tearing their hair out and beating their breasts, others were gnashing their teeth and gouging themselves with their fingernails.

I noticed an intense light far away. I made my way toward it. It turned out to be an exit from the cave. When I emerged from this exit, I found myself in the midst of a brilliance so dazzling that I was stunned, unable to move. As I got used to the brightness, I began to make out the features of a landscape. Everything was bathed in golden light.

The surface I was standing on was like a plain that extended a considerable distance before it ran up against a series of rounded terraces. Each terrace was about the same height as the last, but not as wide, like a sequence of low steps that ascended to a dais in the center. On the dais was an object so bright that it could have been the sun. It was the source of the light that pervaded the plain. It seemed to beat like a vast heart. Every pulse sent waves of light that also seemed like waves of love throughout the entire region.

I began to drift across the plain, irresistibly drawn toward the sun/heart.

Before long, I came across a being made of the same light that emanated from there. This being was like an eddy in the stream of light, a place where the light curled in on itself, creating a localized variation in density. I realized that a diffuse awareness permeated the entire region and that the being I had just encountered was like a condensation of that awareness into a more focused form. I greeted the being and asked where I was. “This is the Afterdeath Zone,” it replied. “And you’re currently in the region called heaven by most of the world’s religions.”

“Does that mean the cave I just passed through is hell?” I asked.

The being was puzzled. “Hell?” it said. “I don’t know what you mean.

Over there is someone who should be able to answer your question.” The being directed my attention toward a larger vortex of energy nearby and moved on. My curiosity about the cave drew me away from the first being and toward the second. As I approached the larger being, I felt that I was coming into the presence of a holy person, a saint, some highly developed soul. I wondered if I should kneel or bow. The first being had a businesslike air. No doubt it was fulfilling a duty of some kind when I interrupted it with my question. The larger one, however, radiated an overwhelming sense of compassion.

“Can I be of service, little one?” it said. Somehow I didn’t mind being called “little” by a presence so immense. There was nothing condescending about the being’s tone, which was one of gentleness and humor. Since it seemed to be towering over me, the being was clearly just stating a fact.

“I was wondering if you could tell me about the cave I passed through on the way here,” I asked. “The one where everyone seems to be suffering so intensely—is that hell?” The being laughed, a musical sound like the shimmer of tiny bells. “No, little one,” it said. “There’s no such thing as hell here—except for the private hells people create for themselves from anger, fear, regret, guilt, shame, lust, and self-pity.

“You see, the Afterdeath Zone is a part of nonphysical reality—or Otherwhere, as we call it. Thought creates experience here. When people who have repressed such emotions die, they experience a kind of hell until these emotions have been discharged. We do our best to help them release themselves from their private hells. But some are more stubborn about punishing themselves than are others.

“As for the cave you mentioned, you can call it an insane asylum for existentialists. Their problem is that they don’t believe they’re here. They remain in that place for as long as it takes them to accept that there’s an afterlife. Their self-immolation is an expression of how they were tormented by their consciences while alive. They had dispensed with the idea of a higher power that insists that all action must contribute to the greater good, so

there was no basis for them to determine which of their actions were appropriate and which were not.

“This higher power doesn’t judge them for having performed inappropriate actions. Sometimes, it’s necessary to work against the greater good in order to understand that obstructing others’ growth merely obstructs your own. Ignoring the greater good can be just as obstructive as actively working against it.

“They’re in that cave because they’re still blind to the existence of this higher power. They can’t see what they won’t see. Even their torment is purely their own invention.”

“The higher power of which you speak—is that the sun/heart I see way off in the distance?” I asked.

“In a manner of speaking, yes. But don’t confuse that great Being with the omnipotent presence you call God. There are more comprehensive powers than that one in Otherwhere! You could call this being the god of humanity.

It represents the essence and highest realization of what humans can be, toward which all of us are evolving. As long as there are humans to participate in the cycle of birth and rebirth, that being will pulse its light and love through their veins.”

Shortly after this interaction, I returned to ordinary waking consciousness in the booth. A lab technician entered and removed the electrodes attached to my fingers. I joined Rita in the console room for a debriefing. Aside from a feeling of weariness, I was more amazed and puzzled by this experience than frightened.

I’d heard of near-death experiences (NDEs) in which people who had been pronounced clinically dead had revived. Often, such people reported that they were sucked into a dark tunnel and carried into a region of light. While there, they engaged in conversation with an entity made of light or love who asked them questions about their lives. This entity pointed out reasons why they should resume these lives and sent them back to their physical bodies.

I hadn’t died while in the booth. Yet I had not only visited a similar region of light but also spoken to entities made of light—and had received answers to questions of my own. Could I truly have stumbled into “the region called heaven by most of the world’s religions,” as the first entity said? Sometime later, I read that many people who have had near-death experiences go back to their lives on earth with reluctance. They often feel an intense desire to return to this region of light and love—but without dying. Had I somehow stumbled upon a way to do so?

“A Visit to Otherwhere” is an excerpt from *Otherwhere: A Field Guide for Astral Travelers* by Kurt Leland, published by White Crow Books.

Kurt Leland has written on astral projection, near-death experiences, and the transcendent possibilities of composing, performing, and listening to music. In 2007, *What Is Enlightenment*? magazine numbered him among “the world’s foremost OBE [out-of-body experience] experts.” In 2017, his book *Rainbow Body: A History of the Western Chakra System from Blavatsky to Brennan* was a finalist for the Benjamin Franklin Award from the Independent Book Publishers Association in the Body, Mind & Spirit category. As well as being a National Lecturer for the Theosophical Society in America, he is a Boston-based classical musician and award-winning composer and maintains a consulting and teaching practice called Spiritual Orienteering.

From Kurt Leland, 2019

> *I wrote* Otherwhere: A Field Guide to Nonphysical Reality for the Out-of-Body Traveler *in the early 1990s to sum up nearly twenty years of out-of-body adventures that began when I was fifteen years old. These adventures took me into nonphysical realms in which time and space behaved differently, “quite other” than we normally experience them—hence the name Otherwhere.*
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> *I explored the locations where our dreams occur and where we find ourselves after death. It took me nearly ten years to find a publisher, but when* Otherwhere *came out in 2001, it sold well and went into a second printing. The publisher dropped it during the economic downturn of 2008 and for years used copies were much sought after and highly priced.*
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> *This new revised and enlarged edition contains everything that was in the first, plus five new chapters detailing how I learned to communicate with beings encountered in nonphysical reality using a nonverbal language I call feel/think. It also provides notes demonstrating how my early adventures tally with the theosophical system of subtle bodies and planes discussed in* The Multidimensional Human: Practices for Psychic Development and Astral Projection.

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